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## LAURENCE STERNE AND CHARLES NODIER

That Charles Nodier was a great admirer of Sterne<sup>1</sup> is quite evident from even a casual reading of his works. His first literary composition<sup>2</sup> shows unmistakable traces of Shandyism, and his subsequent writings—like the early novels of Balzac—are sprinkled with frequent allusions to incidents and characters in *Tristram*. Nor is direct praise of Sterne wanting. "Avez-vous lu Montaigne, Charron, Rabelais, et Sterne?" asks Nodier. "Si vous ne les avez pas lus, lisez-les. Si vous les avez lus, il faut les relire."<sup>3</sup> In *les Proscrits* Sterne is listed among the favorite books of Frantz along with the Bible, Klopstock's *Messiah*, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Richardson, Rousseau, and *Werther*.<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere Sterne is cited as a model for thoroughgoing, exhaustive satire:

Ce qui nous manque en France, ce n'est pas cette fine gaieté de l'esprit qui effleure en passant, avec l'adresse de l'à-propos, un ridicule superficiel, nous en avons à revendre. C'est cette ironie pénétrante et profonde qui fouille et creuse autour de lui, et qui ne se lasse de l'ébranler sur ses racines que lorsqu'elle l'a extirpé. Voyez Cervantes, voyez Butler, voyez Swift, voyez Sterne: ces gens-là ne se contentent pas d'émonder *luxuriam foliorum*; ils sapent l'arbre et le jettent mort sur la terre, sans semences et sans rejetons.<sup>5</sup>

Such frequent reference to Sterne and to his writings indicates that the English humorist had strongly impressed Nodier, but it does not necessarily point to a direct influence. Nodier was likewise a great admirer of Rabelais and is said to have copied three times by hand *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* in order to discover if possible the secret of Rabelais' style. Now, it will be remembered that the

For the influence of Sterne in France during the eighteenth century, see the author's *Etude sur l'influence de Laurence Sterne en France au dix-huitième siècle*, Paris, Hachette, 1911.

<sup>1</sup> *Moi-Même*, written when Nodier was nineteen. The manuscript is at the Library of Besançon. M. Georges Gazier, conservateur of that library, has published an extract of eleven pages, entitled: *Un Manuscrit autobiographique de Charles Nodier*, Besançon, Dodivers, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> *Moi-Même*. Cited by M. Salomon in his *Charles Nodier et le Groupe romantique*, Paris, Perrin, 1908, pp. 22-24.

<sup>3</sup> *Nouvelles*, Paris, Charpentier, 1898, p. 21. *Les Proscrits* first appeared in 1802.

<sup>4</sup> *Voyage pittoresque et industriel dans le Paraguay-Roux et la Palingénésie australe*, in *Nouvelles*, p. 381.

boisterous fun of Sterne is not only markedly similar to that of Rabelais, but is in many cases actually an adaptation of it. Hence it becomes hazardous for the critic to assert that such and such a passage which smacks seemingly of Yorick's style is inspired—if inspired at all—by Sterne rather than by the Curé of Meudon. It is interesting, in this connection, to note Nodier's opinion of the two humorists, as indicative of those characteristics of their writings which most strongly impressed him:

La gaieté de Rabelais est celle d'un enfant turbulent qui brise ses jouets les plus précieux pour en mettre les ressorts à nu. La gaieté de Sterne est celle d'un barbon un peu morose qui s'amuse à faire jouer des pantins. Ce qui domine dans Rabelais, c'est une hilarité effrénée. . . . Ce qui domine dans Sterne, c'est un sentiment amer des déceptions de l'âme, qui se manifeste tour à tour par des rires ou par des larmes, et sous l'expansion duquel on devine toujours les tortures poignantes de quelque angoisse déguisée. . . . Rabelais a voulu se mettre tout à fait en dehors du monde connu pour se donner le droit d'en juger avec une liberté sans bornes. . . . Sterne a cherché à s'en éloigner dans le sens opposé, en se réfugiant dans le centre le plus obscur de la vie intérieure. . . . On croirait que Rabelais a entrepris de se faire pardonner la vérité mordante de ses satires par l'attrait de ses mensonges. On croirait que Sterne a entrepris de se faire pardonner le mensonge innocent de sa fiction par l'attrait de ses vérités.<sup>1</sup>

Not only did Nodier admire Sterne and Rabelais, but he also resembled them not a little, both in mind and in temperament. He possessed a rare genius for conversation, as Ste.-Beuve, Musset, Hugo, and other privileged guests at the *soirées* at the Arsenal Library could all attest. He was the life of every gathering, telling stories, discussing various phases of the literary movement, never happier than when interrupted by a question, and never wittier "than between two parentheses."<sup>2</sup> As he talked, so often did he write. Wonder not then at the charming digressions of the *Souvenirs de Jeunesse*: he has so many, many things to tell you that his pen runs away with him.

Nodier is also a dreamer of dreams, sometimes kindly, sentimental rhapsodies, more often amazing excursions into the realm of the fantastic, as the wonderful adventures of Michel in the *Fée*

<sup>1</sup> *Miscellanées*, in *Œuvres de Nodier*, Paris, Renduel, 1832-41, Vol. V, pp. 16-21.

<sup>2</sup> Jules Janin, Preface to Nodier's *Franciscus Columna*, Paris, Techener, 1844.

*aux miettes*, or the unnamable visions in *Smarra*. His fertile imagination is capable of inventing the wildest extravagances without seeking outside inspiration or example.

A keen satirist, Nodier has yet too kind a heart to hurl poisoned darts. As in the case of Sterne, his unkindest remarks are softened by the brightness of a smile or the glistening of a tear. Nodier's tears, though, are always sincere:

Je voudrais que ceux qui ont fait souffrir les autres souffrissent une fois tout ce qu'ils ont fait souffrir. . . . Je voudrais que cette impression fût déchirante, et profonde, et atroce, et irrésistible. . . . Je voudrais cependant qu'elle durât peu, et qu'elle finît avec un rêve.<sup>1</sup>

One feels throughout all of Nodier's writings something like a regret that all may not be happy, a bitterness born of discontent with society and of the recognition of one's inability to effect any change therein that is absent from Sterne's pages. No one has yet ventured to accuse Yorick of being altruistic.

Bearing in mind the foregoing observations, namely, that Nodier was an admirer of both Sterne and Rabelais and that he possessed at least some traits of mind and temperament in common with them both, let us now consider certain portions of his work that may reveal a Shandyan influence.

*L'Histoire du Roi de Bohême et de ses sept châteaux*<sup>2</sup> is, in the author's own words, "another poor imitation of the innumerable imitations of Sterne and Rabelais." An imitation the work certainly is, at times almost a copy, but scattered throughout the chaos of its digressions and extravagances emerge several episodes charmingly told, and an abundance of delightful humor.

To analyze the book is impossible. The title is that of the story that Corporal Trim thrice essays to relate to Uncle Toby, without ever getting beyond the first sentence.<sup>3</sup> Nodier fares little better. He conceives himself as being composed of three separate persons,<sup>4</sup> Théodore, the kindly dreamer; Breloque, all verve and enthusiasm; and Don Pic de Fanferluchio, who represents science, or rather a

<sup>1</sup> *Les Aveugles de Chamouny*, in *Contes de la veillée*, Paris, Charpentier, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, Delangle, 1830.

<sup>3</sup> *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. VIII, chap. xix.

<sup>4</sup> This idea had already been used by Gorgy in his *Nouveau Voyage sentimental*, Paris, Bastien, 1784.

rubbing of Greek, Latin, etymologies, dates, and paradoxes, labeled erudition. Of course, these gentlemen differ in importance, their proportionate value being: "Théodore, my imagination, no parts; Don Pic, my memory, one part; Breloque, my judgment, nine hundred and ninety-nine parts."

These worthies, each mounted upon his favorite hobbyhorse, set out for the domains of the king of Bohemia, but are straightway carried away by their ungovernable steeds, who bolt so often and to such good effect that, after having covered many leagues, the sturdy travelers find themselves exactly where they were at the beginning. It is useless to follow them into this intricate maze of hurry-scurryings and crisscrossings through realms that even Sterne and even Rabelais never visited. Every whim, every pet aversion, every opinion concerning men, language, or affairs that happened to be fitting through the writer's fecund imagination is here set down in or out of place. Every trick of style, every typographical absurdity that Rabelais or Sterne had invented or borrowed is here to be found, together with many another for which Nodier alone is responsible. The carrying of the tale into the domain of the fantastic and some elements of fun resemble Rabelais, but a goodly portion of the by-play is in Shandyan vein. There are nine pages devoted to lists of birds and insects. There are interrupted sentences, sentences without beginning or ending, sentences composed of words having similar final syllables. There is an imitation of the arrival of a cab that recalls Sterne's imitation of a violin.<sup>1</sup> There is a eulogy on a slipper, together with a list of the various kinds of slippers, that bespeaks a knowledge of Tristram's digression on the same subject.<sup>2</sup> There are discussions between learned doctors on trivial subjects in which the phraseology is pedantic or technical to an absurd degree. There is a newspaper notice inserted in the midst of the reading-matter. The title-page is well along toward the center of the book. There is an excessive use of blank pages, of lines printed upside down or in small capitals. There are remarks exchanged with the reader concerning the progress of the story and the author's skill in handling it. There are frequent apostrophes to Nodier's sweethearts, past and present. There are passages that begin with a tear and end with a laugh.

<sup>1</sup> *Tristram Shandy*, Vol. V, chap. xv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, chap. xix.

Scattered throughout this mass of divagations and more or less amusing eccentricities of composition is the story of the *Aveugles de Chamouny*,<sup>1</sup> served piecemeal to the reader, as are the love affairs of Uncle Toby and the Widow Wadman in *Tristram Shandy*. This tale concerns a blind boy whose misery is augmented by the fact that a blind girl whom he was to marry unexpectedly recovers her sight and deserts him. When Gervais learns that Eulalie has strayed far from the narrow path of virtue, he plunges over a precipice into a roaring torrent. The story, well told, as are all of Nodier's *contes*, resembles somewhat in the presentation the incident of *Maria of Moulines*. Nodier comes across the blind Gervais sitting alone beside a country path, as Mr. Shandy and later Yorick saw Maria. His sympathy is at once aroused. He seats himself beside the unfortunate boy, learns the history of his unhappy love, and how even his dog has left him—just as Maria's goat had abandoned her before Yorick happened by. Hands seek each other, tears of sympathy fall, and with a parting exhortation to be of good cheer this new sentimental traveler goes on his way. Here the resemblance ends. Nodier's ending is romantic, whereas the sentiment is rather akin to that all-too-serious moping over the sufferings of humanity brought into vogue by Rousseau and exaggerated *ad absurdum* by the Marmontels, Lespinasses, and Vernes of the late eighteenth century.

Moreover, it seems fairly probable that Nodier wrote this sentimental tale, not from any admiration for the genre, but rather as a criticism of it, for he sets over against this story another about a dog who loses his life saving a child from a wolf, a tale as simple, as perfect, as devoid of unnecessary ornamentation as any of the *contes* of Perrault. To bring out the contrast between the two styles, Nodier introduces a discussion between Don Pic and Breloque on this subject, in which Breloque (Nodier's judgment) champions the second story. In the *Aveugles de Chamouny*, he concludes, we have "de l'affection pour de la grace, du sentiment pour du tendre, de la déclamation pour de l'éloquence, du commun pour du naïf," whereas the style of the *Chien de Brisquet* is "ni pittoresque, ni

<sup>1</sup> This theme was popular at the time. It had been treated by Pierre Blanchard in *le Rêveur sentimental*, Paris, Le Prieur, 1796, and by F. Vernes in *les deux Aveugles de Franconville*, a one-act comedy in prose, 1807.

romantique, ni poétique, ni oratoire; mais ce qu'il doit être, clair, simple, expressif, approprié aux personnes et aux choses, intelligible à tous les esprits, et par conséquent essentiellement convenable." This seems to establish rather definitely Nodier's attitude toward eighteenth-century sentimentality.<sup>1</sup>

The story of Gervais and Eulalie is not the only episode of this kind in Nodier. His first tale, *les Proscrits*,<sup>2</sup> a somber imitation of *Werther*, contains an account of the writer's meeting with a poor deranged boy, Frantz,<sup>3</sup> which recalls still more distinctly the encounter of Sterne and Maria. The philosophy of the passage is that of Rousseau (and be it said in passing that the great vogue of the *Sentimental Journey* in France was due in no small measure to the popularity of Rousseau's theories), but the setting was certainly inspired by Sterne's little masterpiece. Nodier's sentimental wanderer has encountered, in a secluded nook near a streamlet, a young man of some twenty-five years, whose fine, noble face bears the blight of long years of sorrow. The two men are instinctively drawn to each other:

Nous faisons tous les deux un mouvement involontaire l'un vers l'autre, pour nous embrasser. Une réflexion rapide repoussa ce mouvement en nous-mêmes. Chez moi cette réflexion tenait aux bienséances du monde; chez Frantz, elle était produite, peut-être, par la défiance du malheur.

Je m'assis à ses côtés. Je le regardai avec intérêt et je répétais ses paroles avec effusion.

Plus de repos, plus de bonheur.

Jamais, répondit Frantz. . . .

J'ai beaucoup souffert, reprit-il, en croisant ses mains sur sa poitrine gonflée et en soulevant lentement ses paupières: j'ai vécu dans les villes, et les plaisirs qu'on y achète à si haut prix ne sont que de hideux squelettes sous des habits somptueux. J'en ai cherché d'autres dans mon cœur, mais mon cœur était simple et confiant, et mon cœur a été trahi. . . .

L'amour! . . . Il prononça ce mot avec un soupir; sa figure s'anima, ses yeux s'égarèrent, ses muscles étaient crispés, et sa voix s'éteignit dans les sanglots.

Et l'amitié? dis-je, en posant ma main sur mon cœur, qui battait avec précipitation. . . .

<sup>1</sup> The author may also have had in mind his earlier novels of the Werther type. Nodier frequently belittled his own achievements.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, Le Petit Jeune, 1802.

<sup>3</sup> Named "Lovely" in the first edition.

Reste-t-il des amis à ceux qui souffrent ? dit Frantz.

Oh ! si j'avais été son ami !<sup>1</sup>

Je l'étais déjà ! Frantz laissa tomber sur ma main une larme brûlante.

Nous nous étions entendus, et nous n'avions plus rien à nous apprendre.<sup>2</sup>

Whether there is any real influence of Sterne in Nodier's portrait of Sir Robert Grove in *Amélie*<sup>3</sup> I am not quite sure. Ste.-Beuve remarks in this connection that it would be impossible to touch such a portrait *à la Sterne* "with a more pleasing, or, one might say, more affectionate irony."<sup>4</sup> Yet Grove is not a creation of Nodier, but, according to Francis Wey<sup>5</sup> and others, a portrait, only slightly softened, of Herbert Croft,<sup>6</sup> an English baronet, whom Nodier served as secretary. Several traits in the picture, however, are decidedly reminiscent of Uncle Toby, so much so, indeed, that Nodier himself alludes to this resemblance in the course of the description. In view of these facts I am inclined to think that Sterne may at least have suggested to the French author how to make his portrayal of Sir Robert most effective.

Grove is a kindly old savant whose hobby is the study of the classics and in particular the preparation of an edition of *Pindar*. His constant attendant and servant is a Welsh giant named Jonathas, heartily devoted to the old gentleman and quick to anticipate his every whim. When not absorbed by his researches, in which he takes an amusingly naïve interest, Sir Robert is railing against the Catholics or dreaming of some new invention to add to the numerous articles of his devising that adorn his study. A mingling of pedantry and erudition, of simplicity and eccentricity, he interests us above all by his lovable nature:

Plus boudé au moindre nuage qu'une petite fille dont on a brisé la poupée; revenu à la moindre marque de déférence ou de tendresse et faisant toujours les frais du raccommodement, en accordant plus qu'on ne lui demandait. . . . Je le vois, dis-je, frappant des mains à mon entrée et

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Sentimental Journey*, chapter entitled "Maria": "And wast thou in my land where I have a cottage?" etc. Other passages of this incident parallel closely Sterne's narrative.

<sup>2</sup> *Nouvelles*, pp. 12-15.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Souvenirs de Jeunesse*, Paris, Charpentier, 1893.

<sup>4</sup> *Portraits littéraires*, Paris, Garnier, Vol. I, p. 446.

<sup>5</sup> *Vie de Charles Nodier*, Paris, Techener, 1844.

<sup>6</sup> Croft was something of a savant. Among his works are: *Dictionnaire critique des difficultés de la langue française* and *Horace éclairci par la ponctuation*.



m'accueillant d'un regard aussi bienveillant que celui de mon père. Je vois sa noble figure, plus que sexagénaire, mais fraîche, épanouie, vermeille, adolescente d'imagination et de pensées, et son vaste front chauve, blanc et poli comme l'ivoire, autour duquel se roulaient en boucles des cheveux d'un blond doré, qui auraient fait honneur à un bachelier; car la nature avait pris plaisir à laisser à son vieil âge des vestiges de jeunesse, comme elle en avait laissé à son âme.

It required no great perspicacity to tell when he was worried:

Cette disposition de l'esprit se révélait en lui par trois symptômes invariables, un regard triste et vertical qui s'attachait pensivement au plafond, un soupir à peine entendu qui s'élevait lentement en suivant la même ligne ascensionnelle, et un léger sifflement, ou plutôt une modulation presque insaisissable du souffle qu'aurait cent fois couvert le lila burello de mon oncle Tobie. . . . Hélas, ce serait bien malgré moi qu'une légère ombre de ridicule obscurcirait ces détails d'intérieur philosophique! . . . Ce qui faisait sourire l'esprit dans les innocentes manies du chevalier faisait en même temps pleurer l'âme.<sup>1</sup>

Further touches are given to the portrait here and there during the story. Of these the following incident contains perhaps the best, showing, as it does, the sympathetic way in which Nodier handles an episode that Sterne would doubtless have concluded by some extravagant jest. Sir Robert has discovered the unfortunate love of Maxime for Amélie, a young girl who has aided them in the preparation of the edition of *Pindar*. Sir Robert is speaking:

Suis-je assez fort maintenant pour te retenir sur le bord de l'abîme où je vous ai poussés tous les deux, moi, le plus coupable de nous trois? Oh, que la foudre anéantisse tout ce qui reste de Pindare, sans en excepter mon bel exemplaire de l'édition de Calliergi! Malédiction sur Pindare, sur Calliergi et sur moi!

Le *Pindare* de Calliergi? dit Jonathas, en se penchant à l'oreille de son maître.

Je n'en ai pas besoin, tendre et obéissant Goliath, répliqua le chevalier, qui tournait en même temps un regard affectueux sur le Gallois attentif. Je n'en ai pas besoin du *Pindare* de Calliergi. Je ne veux jamais le revoir. Et cependant, il ferait encore le bonheur de mes yeux, si j'avais trouvé dans l'âme d'un fils de mon choix (Maxime) . . . la soumission résignée de ton âme de sauvage.

Alors Jonathas avait compris qu'il ne s'agissait plus du *Pindare* de Calliergi et il n'avait compris que cela.

Le chevalier nous regarda tous les deux, et il se mit à pleurer.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Souvenirs de Jeunesse*, pp. 107-11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150-51.

Here are the same elements that make up Toby's character: smiles, tears, foibles. Yet how the personality of the two writers differentiates the pictures! I can imagine Sterne, lavish alike of humor and sentiment, conscious of his own importance, exclaiming to Toby: "Brother Shandy, I can't help loving you for your sincerity and for your goodness of heart, but what a fool you are!" Whereas the kindly, genial man that was Charles Nodier exclaims: "Sir Robert, I may smile at your eccentricities, but you are the most excellent man that divine goodness has ever created."

These passages contain all that I have found in Nodier that may be termed sentimental, in the eighteenth-century acceptation of the word. Elsewhere—barring the fantastic tales and satirical pamphlets—a much more tragic note vibrates. Love of the most passionate kind, love that is stronger than death, that fears not horrid disease nor even suicide—such is the stuff of which most of his stories are made. The fact, then, that each one of these digressions from the author's habitual Wertherism or romanticism not only recalls the manner of Yorick, but is accompanied also by a direct reference or by a direct tribute to Sterne, becomes, to say the least, significant.

But it was the haphazard style, the effervescent gaiety, and the keen raillery of *Tristram*, rather than the effusions of the *Sentimental Journey*, that appealed particularly to Nodier and made the most noticeable impression upon his style. All of his articles in lighter vein—*les Marionnettes*, *le Voyage dans le Paraguay-Roux*, *Leviathan le Long*, *Hurlubieu*, *le Bibliomane*, *Polichinelle*,<sup>1</sup> and parts of the *Fée aux miettes*<sup>2</sup>—are sprinkled with whimsical sallies and by-play of the sort that we have already noted in speaking of the *Roi de Bohême*, with here and there passages of a more subtle humor. The settings—usually in some imaginary country or planet—and, on the whole, the style, recall Rabelais rather more than Sterne, but there are frequent witty *gambades*, fanciful musings, and many a keen thrust that only Tristram could have suggested. The following citation speaks for itself:

Moi qui écris péniblement ceci d'après les manuscrits de Berniquet, trois heures du matin sonnante d'horloge en horloge, et à la mourante lueur

<sup>1</sup> The first four of these articles will be found in *Nouvelles*. *Le Bibliomane* and *Polichinelle* are in the *Contes de la veillée*.

<sup>2</sup> First published, Paris, Renduel, 1832; in the *Contes fantastiques*, Paris, Charpentier, 1904.

d'une huile dont mon épicier réclame le prix avec des instances malhonnêtes, je sens la plume échapper de mes doigts. Je m'endors.

—Et vous madame ?<sup>1</sup>

Frequently Nodier takes the reader into his confidence, telling him how many chapters are still due him or how little merit the author possesses. For instance, in the *Marionnettes*, he advises him to read Peignot's article on *Jacquemard*:

Il y gagnera deux choses: la première, c'est le plaisir de lire un des charmants petits écrits de M. Peignot; la seconde, c'est de pouvoir se dispenser très-parfaitement de lire le mien. Je ne vois même aucun inconvénient à ce qu'il ne lise ni l'un ni l'autre.<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere:

Nous sommes, *Polichinelle* et moi, les deux membres d'une équation. On écrirait volontiers: POLICHINELLE  $\times$  son compère = NÉOPHOBUS (Nodier) et réciproquement. Je ne me suis jamais informé de ce qu'en pense *Polichinelle*, mais cette solidarité m'épouvante.<sup>3</sup>

But by far the cleverest passages of all are to be found in the opening and closing chapters of the *Fée aux miettes*. Nowhere has Nodier written with a vivacity, a wittiness, and a verve more like Sterne's, and nowhere is his imitation freer from the taint of borrowing. The use of gestures is especially noteworthy.<sup>4</sup> Take, for instance, the following passage:

—Non! sur l'honneur, m'écriai-je en lançant à vingt pas le malencontreux volume. . . .

C'était cependant un *Tite-Live* d'Elzevir relié par Padeloup.

—Non! je n'userai plus mon intelligence et ma mémoire à ces détestables sornettes! Non! continuai-je en appuyant solidement mes pantoufles contre mes chenets, comme pour prendre acte de ma volonté, il ne sera pas dit qu'un homme de sens ait vieilli sur les sottes gazettes de ce Padouan crédule, bavard et menteur, tant que les domaines de l'imagination et du sentiment lui étaient encore ouverts!

O fantaisie! continuai-je avec élan. . . . Mère des fables riantes, des génies et des fées! enchanteresse aux brillants mensonges, toi qui te balances

<sup>1</sup> *Nouvelles*, p. 345. Cf. also the Preface to the *Fée aux miettes*, in *Contes fantastiques*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Nouvelles*, p. 408.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 429.

<sup>4</sup> Other examples will be found in *l'Amour et le Grimoire* (in the *Nouvelles*) and scattered throughout most of the writings mentioned above. In fact, in all of his *contes* Nodier notes with considerable skill the gesture and the trivial detail that characterize a personage as nothing else can. It would be rash, however, to state that Nodier learned this art from Sterne, as both Richardson and Diderot—to mention but two names—were also past masters in it.

d'un pied léger sur les créneaux des vieilles tours, et qui t'égares au clair de la lune avec ton cortège d'illusions dans les domaines immenses de l'inconnu. . . .

Là-dessus, je m'arrêtai, parce que cette invocation menaçait de devenir longue. . . .

Je voudrais bien savoir, ajoutai-je en rejetant une de mes jambes sur l'autre, car il ne manquait plus rien dès lors à la forme de cette protestation sacramentelle. . . .

Je voudrais bien savoir . . . puisque la grande moitié du monde connu croit fermement aux allocutions de l'âne de Balaam et du pigeon de Mahomet . . . messieurs, quelles objections vous avez contre les succès oratoires du *Chat botté*. . . .

L'histoire et les historiens! Malédiction sur elle et sur eux! je prends Urgande à témoin que je trouve mille fois plus de crédibilité aux illusions des lunatiques! . . .

—Les lunatiques! interrompit Daniel Cameron, que j'avais oublié derrière mon fauteuil, où il attendait debout, dans une attitude patiente et respectueuse, le moment de me passer ma redingote. Les lunatiques, monsieur! Il y en a une superbe maison à Glasgow.<sup>1</sup>

Let us mention finally two instances of direct borrowing. The story of *M. de la Mettrie*<sup>2</sup> contains an almost literal translation of the musings of Widow Wadman concerning the wound of Uncle Toby, and the *Dernier Chapitre de mon roman*<sup>3</sup> a licentious adaptation of the final episode of the *Sentimental Journey*.

To sum up: how much real influence of Sterne do we find in Nodier? In his short stories and novels, barring the two or three passages cited, practically none. In almost all of his works in lighter vein, a decidedly appreciable influence. This influence is not confined to any one period of the author's life, for he wrote *Moi-Même* when a mere youth, and he excuses himself in a sort of humorous way for having perpetrated the *Roi de Bohême* when he was almost old. Whenever he wrote for his own amusement, or when he wished to let fly a dart at *Messieurs les savants*, he donned his fool's cap, bethought himself of Sterne or of Rabelais, and endeavored to outdo them both. Nodier himself did not esteem highly his efforts as a buffoon, and in truth they do not count seriously in our final judgment

<sup>1</sup> *Contes fantastiques*, pp. 79–81.

<sup>2</sup> *Contes de la veillée*, p. 300.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, Cavanagh, 1803. One will also find in this story many of Tristram's tricks of style.

of him. Yet these productions are not without merit. The *Roi de Bohême*, it is true, is hardly more than a *tour de force*, and aside from the two short stories contained in it, which are often reprinted separately, is no longer read; but several of the amusing satires are still found in collections of children's stories—the fate of *Gulliver*—and the *Fée aux miettes* is one of the most charming productions of Nodier's fancy.

FRANCIS B. BARTON

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA